



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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THE MONTHS.

By House of Education Students.

No. VIII. OCTOBER.

By H. M. LAKE.

Oct. 1st, 1903.—This is the month of colour—brown, red, green, and gold on all the woods and hillsides; the month also of falling leaves, telling of the approach of winter, and the farewell cries of many of our summer bird-visitors. It is now that we find numberless fruits on the banks and hedgerows, and fungi of all forms and colours in the woods and meadow-land. Hares run silently across the fields, and now and then one is startled by the cry of a pheasant as it rises from the ground showing its "coat of many colours" in the sunlight.

Oct. 2nd.—A lovely bright October day! We went in search of berries and autumn leaves for the harvest decorations, along a road bordered on either side with a high hedge, except where it led through a small wood. It was here we found the red and yellow leaves trailing along the ground among the bracken. The hedges abounded in hips and haws, and blackberry bushes both in fruit and blossom, but what we prized most for decorative purposes were long trails of the gorgeous black bryony berries. The black bryony, unlike the white, has no tendrils, but twines its stem round any bush or plant which happens to be growing conveniently near—bramble, thorn, honeysuckle, or even stout nettles. Its berries, which grow in the axils of the leaves, are elliptical in shape, and turn from green to orange, and later to a most brilliant red.

Oct. 5th.—Agrimony, wild strawberry, scabius, yellow toadflax, common avens, and harebell are still in flower along the hedge banks—also poppies and several thistles. The tits are very much in evidence just now, A blue tit came and perched quite close to me to-day, showing off his gay blue and green coat in the sunshine. Some long-tailed tits were flying about from tree to tree, and calling to each other

in low soft voices. Several martins flew across the road just in front of us, joined some of their companions in a field, and then continued their flight together. They were probably collecting ready for their departure to a warmer climate.

Oct. 9th.—Leaving the high road through a break in the hedge, we walked along a path of delightfully springy turf, with blackberry bushes on our left, and yellow-brown bracken stretching away to the right. Away over some fields one got a glimpse of the sea—it was a brilliant blue. Oaks, hazels, and a few ash trees grew amongst the bracken, and here and there was a holly tree. One holly was in full blossom, while on others the berries had turned quite red. The little hazel catkins were hanging there on the trees, ready to flower next spring, but with the flowers very closely packed to keep out the winter's cold. Several different kinds of fungi were growing on the turf, but the one we chiefly noticed was the little clavaria, its bright yellow spikes looked so charming in the grass. We also found the black and white candle-snuff fungus, so called probably from its charred appearance. Some pieces were growing in the grass and others on old pieces of wood.

Oct. 10th.—A fungi-hunt in the park! There were fungi of all kinds, from the tiny dust fungus on dead leaves and sticks, to agarics seven or eight inches across. The lovely *Russula rosacea* were growing in groups under the trees, and stereum, a flat velvety fungus, growing layer upon layer on cut down tree trunks. By far the most exciting thing we found was the stinkhorn, a fungus which well deserves its name! The largest we found was eight inches high. The stem was white and porous, growing out of a sheathing membrane, and it bore at its summit a conical cap covered with a very dark green slime. Others we found had no dark green on the cap, and the odour of these was even more offensive (if possible)! We had hoped to find a star puff-ball, but were unsuccessful. There were quantities of the ordinary kind, besides toadstools of various sizes, brown, yellow, tan, purple and grey. Dyers' rocket and scorpion grass were still in flower.

Oct. 15th.—The weather this last week has been appalling, nothing but cold winds and heavy rain. Many of the trees are already quite destitute of leaves. We went out this

afternoon in search of fruits for our collection, and particularly noticed the lovely fruit of the lesser willow herb. When ripe, the seed pod splits up into four segments, showing the seeds closely packed inside, each with its white pappus, soon to be borne away on the wind. We got the fruit of the agrimony, burdock, common avens and cleavers, to add to "Fruits dispersed by animals," and the fruit of hogweed, campion, nipplewort, etc., for "those dispersed by the wind." Berries, which are dispersed by birds, we had already collected.

Oct. 19th.—A young martin was actually seen on a bedroom window-ledge this morning! It could not have been more than a week old. It seems astonishingly late even for a third brood, as the martins usually leave about the middle of October.

Oct. 23rd.—We found wall pellitory and lady's bedstraw in flower, growing on the sheltered side of a wall in an old churchyard.

Oct. 25th.—The sea was a most lovely blue, all flecked with white foam. We walked along the cliffs enjoying the fresh salt air and found several flowers to add to our October list. There were a few belated sea-pinks which had lost most of their colour, besides purple pansies, buckshorn plantain and hemlock stork's bill. The buckshorn plantain grows very freely along these cliffs, and is the only member of its family having the leaves cut into segments.

Oct. 27th.—At the side of a narrow lane leading into the park, we found a very curious cream-coloured fungus, growing among some dead leaves. The stem was white, and deeply channelled all the way up, and it had a most lovely cream cap growing in curly waves. We also found the boletus fungus. It is like the ordinary toadstool in shape, but has tubes finely packed together on its under surface instead of gills, and the spores line the inside of the tubes. At a bend in the path, we came upon half-a-dozen partridges and two pheasants. We trod softly on the turf and for a time they did not see us, but calmly went on picking about for food. As we drew nearer the partridges ran across the path and disappeared behind the rhododendrons, and the pheasants rose and flew to some height over the bushes.

Oct. 29th.—Inside the crevice of an old oak tree, we found the strangest fungus growing—the *Fistuline hepatica*. It very

much resembled the tongue of an animal, and on its upper surface where the flesh had broken was a bright red juice. The under surface was yellow, and covered with closely packed tubes containing the spores. While we were examining it a hare passed quite close to us in the bracken. On our way back we saw a great tit and cole tit sitting together on the branch of an oak tree, and found blue milkwort, eyebright, yellow mullein, centaury and musk storksbill in flower. The blue-green of the pines formed a charming contrast with the rich red and gold of the beeches, and together with the yellow-brown bracken stretching away towards the sea, they made a picture one could never forget.